[Ancient Georgia] 000

Here too we can perceive an essential element of the old system, according to which the eldest member of the *gvari* administered the *sagvareulo*, succession passing from the eldest to the eldest of *gvari*, i.e. to the brother or uncle, and not from father to son. 611

In Strabo's time then the highest power belonged to one *sagvareulo*, the eldest member of which, or, using the old term, the *mamasakhlisi* of which, was King of the whole of Iberia. 622

In the actual administration of justice and of military affairs the King was assisted by the second eldest member of his *gvari*, who after the King held the first place in the country. In time of peace he administered justice, while in time of war he led the King's army.

Next to the *samepo* or royal *gvari* the place of honour was held by the *samghudeio gvari* or "priestly clan," which besides administering religious affairs provided also the executive elements in the primitive state. [793]

No person except a member of the royal *gvari* had the right to possess bondsmen. The numbers of the royal *gvari* as well as of the priestly *gvari* were small. The number of *gvarni* in bondage was also limited. The *gvarni* in bondage were the property of the royal *gvari* in whose *sagvareulo* they lived and to whom they paid their dues in service and in kind. 567

The rest of the population was entirely free and consisted of free *gvarni* which in time of peace followed an agricultural life and in time of war armed themselves and fought the enemy. This free population was divided into *gvarni* or *sakhlni*, who lived each on their respective *sagvareulo*. Private 565 423 621

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793

"ZACHARIUS, PATRIARCH OF GEORGIA IN HIS PONTIFICAL ROBES" (CASTELLI).

l: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

795 771 With the fall of the national monarchy and the predominance of the Mussulman powers began the decline of the Georgian Church. The Turkish capture of Constantinople severed all connection with the Greeks, who had so profoundly influenced every aspect of Georgian religious life, its doctrines, its rites and its architecture. Finally when the Georgian Kingdom was divided, the authority of the Church became divided too.

795 771 793 The writ of the Catholicos of Mtzkheta ceased to extend beyond Kartli. The King of Imereti revived the Catholicosate of Abkhazeti which henceforward exercised a shadowy authority over the Western Caucasus and the Rioni valley; and in Kakheti the Bishop of Alaverdi, in Mingrelia the Metropolitan of Bedia, in Guria the Bishop of Shemokhmedi, followed the separatist tendencies of the local rulers. The influence and efficiency of the clergy speedily declined. All the European travellers in Georgia during the seventeenth century unite in condemning their ignorance, their drunkenness, their immorality and their levity. The bishops were hardly to be distinguished from the ordinary feudal proprietors, and their seats were bought and sold by or conferred as rewards upon the relatives of the different ruling princes. The nobles, demoralized by the humiliating political conditions, which often compelled them to embrace Islam, to send their sons in hostage to be educated by the mullahs of Isfahan, or to give their daughters into Persian or Turkish harîms, had assumed a cynical indifference towards their religion. They combined Mussulman polygamy with Christian drunkenness and interested themselves in either religion only to the extent of celebrating with admirable impartiality the feast-days of both.

The Kartlian kings were frequently required by the Shahs to profess an outward devotion to Islam, and Pitton de Tournefort gives us an amusing picture of the religious exercises of the ruler, contemporary with his visit.

> "Le Prince de Tiflis", he says, "étoit du Rite Grec, mais on l'obligea de se faire circoncire. On dit que ce malhereux professoit les deux religions, car il alloit à la Mosquée et venoit à la Messe chez les Capucins, ôu il beuvoit à la santé de la Saintête." [1]

771 186 Only among the peasantry and the artisan class did any true religious sentiment survive, and this, in reality, took the form of national feeling against the Persians and Turks.

[1] Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un Voyage du Levant* (Paris, 1717), tome II, p. 310.

[Medieval Georgia]

THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

771 793 Nasty than Stables; the Images mangl'd and brok'n and cover'd with Dust and Spiders.

"... The Ornaments of the Altar are nothing but a few Nasty Tatter'd Clouts, torn and stain'd with Wine. ... But the Cathedrals are very clean and well-adorn'd. And I could wish, that every Bishop had as much care of the Education and Instruction of his Flock, as he has of the Cleansing and Adorning of his Church. There are six Bishops in Mingrelia, but those Prelates take no care of the Souls of their Flocks, nor do they ever visit their Churches in their Dioceses. ... The chief Imployment of the Bishops is continued Feasting and Banqueting, where they are Drunk almost every day: they are Rich and go Sumptuously Habited; their Principal Revenue arising from what they Spunge from Their Vassals, and the price of the Women and Children which they sell to the Turks." [1]

[1] Chardin, pp. 95 *et seq.*; for the state of religion in Kartli see Chardin further, and Pitton de Tournefort, Vol. II, pp. 301 *et seq.*

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

439 of the Georgian Church with Rome. By the end of the
648 thirteenth century Latin influence in Georgia was strong, and growing. As early as the time of Marco Polo, Genoese merchants were navigating and trading across the Caspian,[1] and in the first decade of the fourteenth century the Italian monks William of Chiero and Matthew of Chieti were working in Tiflis.

648 The Bank of St. George and the Vatican, not always in
793 unison, supplemented each the other's efforts in the furtherance of Latin influence. In 1316, the *Officium Gazariæ* was
177 organizing the administration of Caffa; and two years later the city became the See of a Roman Catholic Archbishop, whose diocese comprised the whole area from Varna to Saray on the Volga, and from the Black Sea to the Russian dukedoms.[2] In 1314, the Genoese obtained their first treaty from Alexios II of Trebizond; in 1321, John XXII addressed a letter to King Giorgi Brtsqinwalé urging the union of the Georgian Church with Rome, and seven years later John of Florence arrived in Tiflis as first Roman Catholic Bishop, and busied himself in translating Latin ecclesiastical texts into Georgian.[3]

During the period between the establishment of Mongol power and the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, the contact between Georgia and the states of Western Christendom must have been continuous. As early as 1330, there was an English Roman Catholic bishop, Peter Gerald, at Sukhum, whom we find lamenting that his flock were being sold as slaves to the Saracens without his being able to check the traffic;[4] and Germans, Italians and Frenchmen succeeded each other in the See of Tiflis. In 1441, a Georgian bishop was in attendance at the Ecumenical Council of Florence; and in 1461, Georgian and Trapezuntine ambassadors, escorted by Ludovico of Bologna, the Papal Legate in the East, were present at the coronation of Louis XI.[5] In 1496, the Borgia Pope Alexander VI was writing to thank Constantine III of Kartli for his congratulations on the capture of Granada from "the Agarians";[6] and there is a letter extant which shows that Constantine sent an ambassador by way of Poland and Lithuania with a gift for Isabella of Castile, of nineteen

[1] Polo, Yule's ed., I, 52.
[2] W. Bartold, Article "*Kafa*" in *Encyclopædia of Islam*.
[3] Tamarati, *Histoire de l'Eglise Géorgienne*, pp. 403 *et seq.*
[4] Heyd, II, 192, quoting Raynaldi, *Ann. eccls. ad. an.* 1330, No. 57.
[5] Tamarati, *ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

pieces of embroidered brocades of Yezd, fourteen *mithkals*[1] of large pearls and eighteen panthers' skins.[2]

The writings of Latin travellers and diplomatic agents during the two centuries of Latin activity in the Black Sea reflect the rapid decay of social conditions in Georgia. The earlier travellers write in terms of admiration. Marco Polo's information on Georgia refers to the third quarter of the thirteenth century, to the time of King Dmitri Tavdadébuli. The Georgians in those days held a good name. They were "*very handsome, capital archers, and most valiant soldiers*".[3] Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, a little more than a century later, is little less favourable in his brief reference to the Georgians. He regards them as "a fine race of men"; and he speaks with admiration of the King, Giorgi VII, the hero of the Georgian struggle against Timur.

In the last quarter of the fifteenth century the picture is a very different one. Weakened by the ravages of the Black Death and the invasions of Timur, Georgia had, in the middle of the century, been stricken by civil war and by the raids of the Turkoman masters of Iran and Eastern Anatolia. Pontic Christendom was in extremity, and the last ambassadors of Georgia, Trebizond, and Byzantium had made their vain approaches to the courts of Europe. The Turks had Constantinople in 1453, and while Georgian and Trapezuntine ambassadors were attending the levées of the French and the Burgundian monarchs, the Sultan marched to Trebizond. Ludovico of Bologna, that errant, rather sinister Legate in the East, had been entraining many years a plan for uniting the contentious Georgian dynasts with Uzun-Hassan, the Turkoman tyrant in Tabriz, and with the frightened Greeks of Trebizond, against the Ottoman Sultan. Too late, the Venetian Signory made an urgent effort to implement the Legate's plan. Three agents, Josaphat Barbaro, Ambrogio Contarini and Caterino Zeno—the last a relative of Uzun-Hassan's Comnenian wife—were sent to the East, and between the years 1471 and 1474 they were travelling and intriguing in Persia and Georgia. Constantinople and Trebizond were already lost; and while Contarini was waiting in Fasso for a ship to take him to Caffa, he heard that that city had fallen to

[1] The *mithkal*, a Persian weight, was equivalent to 10 ounces.

[2] Brosset, *H. de la G.*, I, 409. The difficulty which Brosset found in the synchronization of the date 1463 is removed, in view of the evidence published by Tamarati in the letter of Alexander VI. The date of Constantine's letter to Isabella would be 1493 and not 1463.

[3] Polo (Yule), I, 50.

5: Allen H-4 (no date) 1923 RH1 Caucasia
Georgia RT1

sians imposed such an onerous tax on cattle and trees that, five years later, the army of Nadir Shah was beset by famine. But the Persian exactions continued, until in 1747 the King of Karthalinia effected a kind of general strike by withdrawing all the working population into the hills and strong places. Lastly, in consequence of the wars, the people were frequently subjected to a special tax, enduring over a period of years, the proceeds of which were spent in the repair of churches and castles and in the redemption of slaves.

In two respects the Church in Georgia bears an important relation to the political history of the country. Firstly, Christianity, both in Zoroastrian and Mussulman days, represented the influence of Byzantium and the West as opposed to that of Persia and the East. And the prosperity and power of the Church fluctuated according to the respective strength of Christendom and Islam. Secondly, Georgia did not experience the struggle between Church and State which was taking place in other parts of Christendom. This fact must be attributed directly to the menace of Islam. The influence of the Church with the peasantry was too valuable to the King, and the armed protection of the King was too important to the Church, to allow of either of them attempting to weaken or dispense with the other. The revival of the Georgian monarchy saw the reappearance of a Catholicos at Mtzkhet, and the rich endowment of churches and monasteries. While Henry II in England was wrangling with Thomas à Becket, the Georgian Kings were showering favours and privileges on their clergy. The Catholicos and his bishops held wide lands and owned great numbers of slaves; many nobles were the vassals of Mtzkhet. Besides this, the clergy were free from all taxation, being liable only to contribute in a national emergency.

During the great days of the Bagratid monarchy the Church flourished and grew rich, under the protection of and in alliance with the Crown. But rarely do we note traces of that friction between the two dominant bodies in the State which was disturbing the politics of Western Christendom. The Catholicos, indeed, was recognised virtually as the equal of the King, and his feudal levies were commanded by an independent General, nominated by himself.

The two powers seem to have been interdependent; the King nominated a new Catholicos; the Catholicos presided over the Assembly of lords and bishops at the coronation of a new King. Together the King and the Church monopolised the greater part of the wealth of the country. Hundreds of

52 Allen H-4 (no date) 1923 RH1 Caucasia
Georgia RI1

churches and monasteries sprang up, constructed at great cost by architects, stonemasons and woodcarvers imported from Byzantium. The churches were full of gorgeous vestments, of rare illuminated holy books, of miraculous relics presented by noble devotees returned from the Holy Land, of costly gold and silver vessels. At the boards of the Catholicos and of his bishops holy men and their lay guests feasted to their full on the first fruits of the land. And the Church was chosen by the cadets of the aristocracy as a career more lucrative and more pleasing than service at the Court, or in the trains of the great *didebuls*.

With the fall of the national monarchy and the predominance of the Mussulman powers began the decline of the Georgian Church. The Turkish capture of Constantinople severed all connection with the Greeks, who had so profoundly influenced every aspect of Georgian religious life, its doctrines, its rites and its architecture. Finally when the Georgian Kingdom split, the Church split too. The influence and efficiency of the clergy speedily declined. All the European travellers in Georgia during the seventeenth century unite in condemning their ignorance, their drunkenness, their immorality and their levity. The bishops were hardly to be distinguished from the ordinary feudal proprietors, and their seats were bought and sold by, or conferred as rewards upon, the relatives of the different ruling princes. The aristocracy, demoralised by the humiliating political conditions which often compelled them to embrace Islam, and forced them to send their sons in hostage to be educated by the Mullahs of Isfahan, or to give their daughters into Persian or Turkish harîms, had assumed a cynical indifference towards their religion. They combined Mussulman polygamy with Christian drunkenness, and interested themselves in either religion only to the extent of celebrating, with admirable impartiality, the feast-days of both.

Only among the peasantry and the artisan class did any true religious sentiment survive, and this for the most part took the form of national feeling against the Persians. For the rest, the peasants clung to a number of superstitions dignified with the name of Christianity. But the churches were in ruins and for the most part unfrequented. Chardin has something cynical to say about their condition: "Les Géorgiens . . . ont une coûtume assez étrange de bâtir la plupart des églises sur le haut des montagnes. . . . On les voit et on les salue en cet éloignement, de trois ou quatre lieues; mais on n'y va jamais; et l'on peut bien assurer que la plupart

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

Besides the above-mentioned buildings on the sacred grounds of the *Khati*, there are also: (1) an altar put together from stones. On the altar is placed a cup, and around it are placed different objects, such as beads, small looking-glasses, pieces of metal, money, etc., which are brought by the people as offerings to the *Khati*. (2) Near the altar is a pit covered with stone slabs and having a quadrangular aperture through which runs the blood of sacrificed animals, the skulls of which are hung or set up on the branches of the trees nearby. (3) The stone pillar about one and one-half metres high, with a square base and gradually inclined forward to the flat top, so that the pillar represents the form of a truncated pyramid. Upon it is found a great number of horns of different shapes and kinds from wild animals which have been killed and brought as thank-offerings to the *Khati* by hunters. During the special religious celebrations and festivals, the candles are fixed upon it and burned in honor of the *Khati*.

The whole ground occupied by the *Khati*, the other buildings, and the sacred grove is surrounded by a stone wall. Women, who are regarded as unclean, have no right to enter the walled precincts of the *Khati*. During the religious festivals and celebrations, which present an occasion for plenty of eating and still more drinking, the women are served outside the *Khati* walls, where they have a good time in their own way.

These sanctuaries (*Khatis*) have special attendants who are the guardians of the material belongings of the sanctuaries as well as the faithful conservers of all traditions and the executors of the different ceremonies which constitute their religion. The number of these attendants is considerable and each of them has a special name and special duties to perform.

Although having the same names, the prerogatives of the attendants of the *Khati* in the different communities are not the same. The attendant, for example, called *dasturi* has more obligations in one community than in another; the same is true of the other servants of the *Khati:* the *dekanozi, khutsi,* and *khevis-beri.* The name has not the same equivalent of rank. Consequently the accounts of various authors concerning the different categories of the attendants of the *Khati* and their functions are not in accord-

[see p. 28 ff. -- Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

● 773 ance with each other. So the information given by the two best experts of Khevsur conditions, R. D. Eristov and N. A. Khudadov, is contradictory in many essential points.

This situation is lengthily discussed by everyone who has written anything about the Khevsurs and their religious beliefs. These writers deplore the disorder existing in the hierarchy of the attendants of the *Khati* and try to bring order out of apparent confusion. We may be justified in thinking, on the other hand, that all this endeavor to bring "order out of confusion" is not only unnecessary but misleading and defective, as unreal and as an artificial notion. That the attendants with the same name have different prerogatives in the various Khevsur communities is not difficult to understand if we take into consideration the existing conditions of the country, where there is not a state but where every community is a social unit unto itself; and to expect to find under such circumstances, where, besides, the people live by traditions only, ignorant of the written records, a rigid ecclesiastical hierarchy with punctually defined duties and obligations for everyone of the attendants, is a futile and superfluous effort.

The attendants of the *Khati* are known under the names of *khutsi, dekanozi, dasturi, mnate, shulta,* and *khevis-beri;* besides these attendants, there are also the servants of the *Khati* who do not perform any religious ceremonies.[30] They are: *mekhate, medroshe,* and *mezanduri.* The *mekhate* is the principal person in the latter category of servants. The *medroshe* is the standard-bearer, from the Georgian word *drosha* (standard). The *mezanduri* has in his custody the property of the *Khati.* The *khutsi* is the priest of the *Khati.* He is appointed to his office, not by other attendants of the sanctuary or by any mortals, but, as the people believe, is chosen by the *Khati* himself through the medium of the *kadagi* (the diviner) of the community, who reveals the supernatural appointment. Usually the illness of one member of the family or of one of the relatives of the future *khutsi* serves as the motive for his election. The *kadagi* declares that the illness is sent by the *Khati* as an expression of his will to see the candidate in-

[30] Eristov: a, 102.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
CHEVSUR

stalled as *khutsi*. The fulfillment of this wish of the *Khati* has as a consequence the recovery of the sick person, but if there is no such recovery the explanation is that the *Khati* has refused to accept the candidate.

At once, after his appointment, the new *khutsi* brings to the *Khati* an ox as a sacrifice.

The *khutsi* is regarded by the people as a sacred person. His duties consist in saying the prayers, performing marriage ceremonies, bestowing the benediction upon the people during the religious festivals and gatherings, killing the sacrificial animals and conducting funerals and commemorative ceremonies for the dead. In the custody of the *khutsi* are also, in many sanctuaries, the sacred silver vessels of the *Khati* which are, in many cases, worth a fortune, amounting in value sometimes to as much as twenty thousand rubles in silver,[31] and which are kept concealed in dug-out holes. According to Eristov, the *dasturi*, and not the *khutsi*, are the custodians of these silver vessels. The *khutsi* also takes care of the community standard (the drosha), which, as we have said, is so highly esteemed by the people that when the *khutsi* carries it out of the *Khati* on special occasions and shows it to the people, everyone goes down on his knees in deep reverence and shouts repeatedly the words of the *khutsi:* "Victory to the Lord and His servants!" In the silence which ensues the *khutsi* takes a cup of beer, and keeping it lifted high in his right hand, pronounces a curse against every thief who has taken anything from the treasury of the *Khati* or belonging to the community. Simultaneously he pours out the sacred beer on the ground and says: "So may be emptied the house, family and fortune of the culprit!"

The duties of the *khutsi* differ from those of the *dekanozi*.[32] Although they both take part in the religious celebrations, the *khutsi* has no right to kill the sacrificial animals brought by the people. But the *khutsi* has the advantage of conducting funeral ceremonies, in which the *dekanozi* does not mix. Although the *khutsis* are subordinate to the *dekanozis*, there are also *khutsis* who perform both

[31] Eristov: a, 99.
[32] *Ibid.*, 102.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

793 offices together. The office of *khutsi* is attained in the same way as that of *dekanozi*, through the *kadagi*, with the difference that the candidate for the position of *khutsi* must learn by heart beforehand all prayers which are necessary in conducting funeral ceremonies. The *khutsi* as well as the *dekanozi* is expected to be an example of moral purity.

Besides the appointment through the *kadagi*, there is another way for a *dekanozi* to attain the post; that is, by falsehood and bribery. Everyone who has the wish to become a *dekanozi* pretends to be ill and then tells everyone that in his dreams he saw a saint who predicted to him that he would not recover from his illness unless he consecrated himself to the service of the *Khati* (desired name is given) as a *dekanozi*. After this the self-styled sick man brings an ox or a cow into the *Khati*, where he wishes to be the *dekanozi*. The *dekanozi* and *khutsi* of the *Khati* meet for the occasion and kill the sacrificial animal brought by the candidate, who treats them all and gives the solemn oath to abstain in the future from eating pork, eggs and all kinds of poultry, and to eat only the meat of horned cattle. After this ceremony he is regarded as lawfully installed in the post of *dekanozi*. Or he may attain the office by bribing the other *dekanozis*.

The *dekanozis* may also be *kadagis*, who are mostly nervous persons, with an inclination to epilepsy.[33] There is no agreement of opinion among the authors concerning the precise duties of the *dekanozi*. Eristov, Khudadov, and Dr. Radde regard the *khutsi* as subordinate to the *dekanozi*. On the other hand, Urbneli, G. Merzbacher, and others think that the office of *khutsi* is higher than that of the *dekanozi*. According to Professor A. Khakhanov,[34] the *dekanozi* is the same person as the *khevis-beri*, representing the highest rank among the attendants of the *Khati* (among the Tushes), and after him in rank are the *khutsi*, and last, the *mnate*, who executes the orders of the *khevis-beri*. He kills the sacrificial animals after they are blessed by the *dekanozi*. He also watches the property of the *Khati*, consisting of flocks of sheep, gardens, and other property of the sanctuary, and on special days of religious

[33] Eristov: 101.
[34] Khakhanov: a, 44-5.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

celebrations and festivals he is the head steward and generously entertains the people with wine from the garden of the *Khati*. Furtred, the *mnate* is obliged to take care of the offerings which the people bring to the *Khati*, such as sheep, wine, hens, belts, small bells, etc.

Among the Khevsurs and Pshavs, the *shulta* holds a position similar to the Tush *mnate*. The *shultas* are watchmen and workers for the *Khati*. They are chosen every year from the male members of the community by the *khutsi* and the *dekanozi*. The *shultas* supervise and take active part in the field work on the grounds belonging to the *Khati*, store away into granaries (*begeli*) the harvested crop. For their work they receive the straw of the barley as a reward. Among the Pshavs, the *shultas* also brew beer, a function performed by the *dasturi* in Khevsuria.

The attendants of the *Khati* known under the Iranic name of *dasturi* are beer-brewers and cooks of the *Khati* in Khevsuria. They are appointed by the *khutsi* from members of the community for a certain period, or only for the time of the holiday.

Beer is regarded by the Khevsurs as the sacred beverage and its preparation is accomplished by special rules and regulations. During the beer-brewing the *dasturis* are obliged to go barefooted, without hat or belt, must not leave the precincts of the *Khati*, say not a word, and must not turn their backs toward the *Khati*.

The duties of Pshav *dasturis* are greater and more difficult than those of the Khevsurs. The Pshav *dasturis* are required to watch the sanctuary during the whole year. They are chosen from every home in the village and serve for one year. Thus, if the village consists of one hundred homes, each home will have the opportunity of furnishing a *dasturi* only once in a hundred years.

The Pshav *dasturi* under no circumstances has the right during his year of service to return home or have relations with his wife. He has no right to talk with anyone but the *dekanozi*. His food consists of coarse black bread and water. To get the bread he takes wheat from the granary of the *Khati* (called *begeli*), brings it in the *Khati's* mill, and from the flour he bakes a loaf in hot ashes. The thick, heavy cakes are called *khmiadi*. The *dasturi* must keep himself clean, take a bath every week in the river nearby,

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur
Svan

793 whither he goes by a special pathway which cannot be used by anyone but him. He must take the baths, regardless of weather or the time of year.

All the above-mentioned attendants of the *Khati* have their office either for a certain period of time, as the *shulta* and *dasturi*, or for life, as the *khutsi* and *dekanozi*. None of these duties is hereditary. Besides the above mentioned dignitaries of the sanctuary, there is one more, called the *khevis-beri*, whose post is hereditary, and if he dies without issue his place is filled by the *khutsis, dekanozis* and *dasturis*. According to Professor A. Khakhanov, the duty of the *khevis-beri* is not hereditary among the Tushes, but the official is chosen for life. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that Professor Khakhanov calls almost all attendants of the Tush Khati, *khevis-beri*. This word means, in English translation, "the elder of the defile," and is formed from two Georgian words: *khevi* (gorge or defile) and *beri* (monk or elder).

The people hold the *khevis-beri* in the greatest respect. He is the loyal guardian of the *Khati* and the preserver of the old traditions of the community. His duties were, as Mr. Urbneli thinks, of a purely political character. The *khevis-beris* were appointed by the Georgian kings, and only later, with the breaking of the close ties (owing to political causes) between the Lowlands—center of administration and culture—and the high mountain regions, were the duties of the *khevis-beri* gradually transformed from civil to religious character. The same opinion is expressed by Professor Khakhanov.[85]

346 778 If, after this review of the places of worship and their attendants among the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes, we turn to Svanetia, we notice that a Svan church is usually a small structure built of roughly-hewed stones with a roof of thin planks. In architecture the Svan churches resemble ordinary houses. However, they are usually set apart from the dwellings, surrounded by woods, and have a stone enclosure, with a church bell suspended from a pole nearby. (Usually, on the outer walls saints and mythical heroes are pictured in the Persian style.) The interior of the churches is dark and small; the largest can accommodate no more

[85] Khakhanov: a, 44.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Swan

than eighty persons. Rods are stretched from the ceiling to support the horns of wild goats and jaw-bones of sheep which have been offered as sacrifices; these relics are so numerous that they almost fill the churches, especially those in Free Svanetia. In the corners are piles of various objects, such as arrows, helmets, pieces of broken glass, and what not. Especially interesting are the wooden cages with birds carved out of wood and hanging from the ceiling. All objects preserved in the churches are regarded as sacred. The walls inside the churches are covered with images of the saints and sometimes pictures of the kings with crowns on their heads. Characteristic of every Svan church is the large wooden cross fixed in the farther part of the church on a square elevation. Such crosses are covered with thin silver plates representing small icons (holy images). Similar crosses are also found in the churches of Dadian Svanetia, in Ilori, and in Ratcha.[36] All these churches possess, according to Bakradze, a large number of holy images, crosses and sacred books, especially those in Upper Svanetia, comprising the communities of Mujal, Mesti, Kali, and Ushkul.

The horns of animals sacrificed as thank-offerings, are preserved in the churches, such large were piles of these horns in a church in the village of Chubiani "that it was necessary to count them by thousands."[37]

The Svan churches, with all their archeological treasures as well as their worthless objects, such as broken glass, earthenware, jaw-bones of sacrificed animals, etc., were jealously guarded by the native priests (*bap* in Free Svanetia and *pap* in Dadian Svanetia). The word *pap*, or *bap*, is borrowed from the Megrelian language, in which a priest is called *papa*. The *paps* have their assistants, called *mtavar* and *dikvnar*.

The office of the *pap* is not hereditary, because anyone may attain it by fulfilling all the necessary preparations, but in the meantime the son of a *pap* has special privileges in following his father in the office without being required to make any special preparation. The *paps* came from the lower class of society — the

[36] Bakradze: a, 36
[37] Radde: a, 112-14.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

783 commoners. The people of the nobility are regarded as degraded if they take the office of *pap*.

Everyone who desires to become a *pap* begins his preparation in boyhood, remaining in training for many years. The pupil serves the *pap* as his master: he cooks for him, does all his housework, etc. In return, the *pap* teaches his apprentice the church songs, prayers and readings from sacred books, which are far from being correct, because the *paps* themselves are usually ignorant of the meaning of the books they read and the prayers they say. The reading is usually mechanical, and one passage is mixed with another. When the young man is through with the training and has acquired the necessary skill and knowledge to be a *pap*, he makes his tutor a present of an ox or a cow, and on the appointed day he is ordained for duty. The consecration takes place in the church; the candidate kisses the holy images and the altar, and the *paps* sprinkle him with holy water while reading the prayers. In former times the installation of a new *pap* could take place only by permission of the church dignitaries of the Georgian Church who resided in Tsageri and Tsaishi, but later this was abandoned, and the consecration was performed by the *paps* themselves. This fact made the attainment of the office of *pap* very easy and is in turn responsible for the large number of churchmen in Svanetia. Thus, in the community of Ushkul, D. Z. Bakradze[38] found thirteen *paps*, and according to A. Khakhanov,[39] the number of *paps* in some villages reached fifteen. In the meantime, in the whole of Free Svanetia I. A. Bartolomei[40] found only one real priest of the Georgian Church (in the community of Mulakhi) who had the necessary knowledge and preparation for the performance of his duties.

The *paps* in Svanetia do not wear any distinctive clothing and are not distinguishable in this respect from the ordinary people of the community. Only the *paps* of Ushkul dress themselves and let their beards grow in the manner of the priests of the Georgian Church. The *pap* carries arms, as is customary throughout the

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[38] Bakradze: a, 48.
[39] Khakhanov: i, 115.
[40] Bartolomei: 200.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Svan

Caucasus, which are removed—all except the dagger—when entering a church. 793

Although the *paps*[1] are ignorant and mostly illiterate, yet they render great service to their country and their people. They have preserved many objects of great archeological and scientific value and have hindered the spreading of Mahommedan teaching in the country by upholding the Christian faith, although in a distorted and mutilated form. [795]

The *paps* conduct services in the churches, perform wedding and funeral ceremonies, baptize children, kill the sacrificial animals, and see to the punctual observance by the people of the established holidays.

The Svans have numerous holidays created by religious and climatic conditions. Thanks to the high elevation of the country in the Alpine regions of the Caucasus, the cold winter lasts for half a year, and only during the remaining six months is work carried on in the open. But in spite of such a short time, the Svans work only four days a week, and the other three—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday—are passed in rest, counting as holidays. On these days no one is allowed to work; he is permitted only to hunt. The people believe that in case of disobedience of this rule, not only the guilty person but his whole community will be severely punished by a pestilence, a bad harvest, hail or other mischief. Therefore, in order to avoid the danger in the summer months of July and August, when the fields are full of ripening grain, every man in the village is obliged to take a public oath by which he solemnly promises to abstain from any kind of work on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Anyone who is found guilty of disobeying this rule is obliged to pay a fine amounting to from one to three rubles. The money is used to cover communal expenses, such as religious festivals, sacrifices, and other items. Besides these three holidays, the Svans are forbidden during the months of May and June to make cheese or to eat any food prepared from milk on Fridays. 796 782

In addition to observing holidays in order to insure a good harvest, the people bring sacrifices to God almost every Sunday during the months of July and August. These public sacrifices are

[1 i.e. Svan priests; see cap. III, pp 35-37 -- Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

ning of this chapter, religion with the Georgian Highlanders held a sustaining and regulating place in the life of the community. The various and numerous religious rules were observed and executed without any hesitation.

In the celebration of holidays in the leading sanctuaries, not only the natives but their neighbors (even the Mohammedans) take part. Thus, at the festival of the *Lashris-jvari,* at the end of July, known as *lashroba,* or *Lashris-jvaroba,* there are present, besides the Pshavs, Tushes, Khevsurs, Mahommedan Kists, Georgians from Kartli and Kakleti, and others. This fact was observed by the French investigator, Baron de Baye,[41] during the religious celebrations in the monastery of Alaverdi in Kakhetia. The religious festivals in the cathedral of Alaverdi are described in detail by A. L. Zisserman.[42]

The Khevsurs come to these festivals wearing their best clothes and arms, and bring animals for sacrifice. Visitors who have given a special vow to the *Khati* are bare-footed and wear over their garments long white shirts which they take off at the entrance to the enclosure of the sanctuary and throw into a pit especially dug for this purpose. A great number of animals is sacrificed to the *Khati*—hundreds of sheep, goats and oxen are killed. Baron de Baye relates that 750 sheep and two oxen were sacrificed at the celebration in the monastery of Alaverdi in Kakhatia, and that the celebration in the Khevsur sanctuary, *Khakhmatis-jvari,* required the sacrifice of from 500 to 600 sheep and twenty to forty oxen. The blood of the animals is caught in a special wooden vessel. The *dekanozi* who butchers the animals washes his hands in the blood and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the offerer. The pelt and fore part of the animal belong to the *dekanozi* and the hind part to the offerer, who forwards it to the attendants of the *Khati* to use as supply for the general feast which follows the religious ceremonies.

Besides saying prayers and killing the sacrificial animals during religious holidays, the *dekanozis* also hear complaints of various kinds and settle disputes, according to established custom.

[41] Baye: a, 253.
[42] Zisserman: 23-4.

1 Dr, shrine attendants; see cap. III, p 21 ff., esp. p 29--Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

In general, all these religious celebrations are accompanied by national songs, dances, and among the Pshavs by the shooting of guns to test their marksmanship (*khabakhi*). The Khevsurs also have *khabakhi*, not during religious festivals, but during the ceremonies held in commemoration of the dead. These holidays principally afford an opportunity for excessive eating and drinking enormous quantities of the sacred beer, and usually end in a fight.

Dr. Radde[43] relates that during his visit to Khevsuria he found the whole congregation of a community, including the dignitaries of the sanctuary, after the holiday celebration, dead drunk and stretched out on the "sacred" grounds of the *Khati* in a deep sleep and snoring loudly.

The *Khevis-beri* and the *dekanozis*, in addition to their religious duties, also handle the judicial and administrative affairs of the country. Thus, for example, every year, beginning the 8th of October (if it does not fall on a fast day) until the 10th of November, the Pshav *khevis-beris* take the sacred standard (*drosha*) from one of the principal sanctuaries in Pshavia, the *Khati* of *Lashris-jvari*, and, accompanied by a group of horsemen, visit every village in the country, administering justice and fining the individuals found guilty of disobedience of the regulations of established custom.

The influence of the *khevis-beri*[a] of the sanctuary of *Lashris-jvari* in Pshavia was in times past so great upon all twelve communities forming the Pshav people,[44] that when they had decided to undertake, with the sacred *drosha* in their hands, a war against the neighboring Kists, and the rumor about this spread over the country, every man without exception made haste to the meeting place, which was in the defile of Maturi (*Maturis Khevi*). In two or three days everyone was present at the meeting place, well armed and carrying his own ration of provisions, enough to last for two weeks in expedition. "Woe to the man," writes R. D. Eristov,[45] "who will not present himself under the standard

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[43] Radde: c, 259.
[44] Pshavia, 250-1.
[45] Eristov: a, 137-8.

[a] [i.e., religious personnel; see cat. 116, p 29 ff. --Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

(*drosha*) of the *Khati* . . . . Then there is no life for him: he must pay a great fine as punishment, he is despised by his fellow-members of the community, and the wrath of the *Khati* is upon him . . . ."

Summoned in such a way, the Pshav army attacked the Kists and seized their herds and flocks, and returned home. The booty was divided into three parts. One part was given to the *Khati* as a thank-offering for the success of the expedition. Another part was sent to the head of the administration, called *mouravi* in Georgian, the *pristav* of the Russian government; and the third part of the prize was divided among the participants in the expedition. For every captive a ransom of sixty rubles was demanded, which was given in full to the sanctuary of *Lashris-jvari*. The ransom for a head, if taken from the slain, was one ox and one sheep. Returning from their expedition, the Khevsurs carried as trophies, according to the existing custom, the right arms cut off from slain enemies. These arms were fastened usually upon the doors of the houses. They were seen and reported by investigators who visited Khevsuria. Thus Dr. G. Radde,[46] who was there in the summer of 1876, saw such trophies in the villages of Guro and Shatil nailed on the walls of the Khevsur towers. "Man sah an der nord-seite dieses Thurmes, im Dorfe Guro," writes Dr. Radde, "drei Lesginer-oder Kisten-Haende angenagelt. Das waren doch Trophaeen aus den fuenfziger Jahren. Bisweilen befinded sich an solchen Haenden noch ein Theil des Unterarms. . . ." And further[47] he relates that he found the hand-trophies also in the village of Shatil. "Die Hauser des Dorfes Schatil verden durch hohe starke Schiefermauern gebildet. Gleich unten sahen wir neuen Haende unter dem Carniese angenagelt."

The officials of the Russian government many times used the influence of the *khevis-beri* and the standard (*drosha*) of *Lashris-jvari* when it was necessary to call the people together.

The influence of the attendants of the sanctuaries upon the country and the power which they exercised upon the people is

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[46] Radde: a.
[47] *Ibid.*

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
Chevsur

793 642 diminishing, although very slowly, liberating the people's social life from religious control.

If the people were obedient before to all regulations and orders of the attendants of the sanctuaries, executing their orders readily and without any hesitation for fear of the supernatural power of the *Khati*, gradually they have begun to dare to disobey the oppression of religion and to seek the protection of government officials. This fact is clearly pictured in the information given by R. D. Eristov, who was himself for two years the head of the administration governing the district occupied by the Khevsurs, the Pshavs and the Tushes.

"Once there came to the head of the district administration," 681 626 793 642 writes Eristov,[48] "a Pshav with a petition to unbind him. Such a request surprised us and at the same time made us laugh, because the Pshav was not bound at all, but he soon explained to us the meaning of his petition, as follows: When the *dekanozis*[1] visiting the defile came to the village where the Pshav lives, he was not at home and naturally he could not meet them with the necessary and customary presents. Because of this the *dekanozis* hung a silver cup upon a tree and with this they 'bound' the man; that is, they put upon him the following prohibitions: that nobody be permitted to talk with him; that nobody be allowed to lend him anything; and finally they forbade him to take part in the religious and social gatherings until he paid the enormous fine imposed upon him. But as the poor Pshav was unable to pay even a fourth of the requested indemnity, he was petitioning to be unbound (set free) from the payment of the fine imposed upon him."

769 In the beginning of this chapter[2] we mentioned the Georgian Highlanders' belief in the existence of spirits and life beyond the grave. Their belief in spirits and their cult of the dead represent the fundamental and principal part of their religion. The Georgian Highlanders believe that death does not signify the end of life, but on the contrary the deceased continues to live beyond the grave, and the manner of their life and the necessities of their existence are the same as those of people living on the earth.

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[48] Eristov: 134.

[1] [a priest; see cat. 116, pp. 40-41, 2956. -- Analyst]

[2] [cat. 116, p. 1945 -- Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

part of Georgia and much easier of access, do not have customs as rigid as those of the Khevsurs and Pshavs. The Tush women with monthly issue do not leave their homes, but instead of a *samrevlo* the Tushes make a special addition to the house for the woman in question.

Not only the person of the menstruating woman is regarded as unclean, but also the place of her stay and all objects which are used by her in the time of separation are unclean, and every contact with them is believed to make a man unclean also. Even to pass by or look in the direction of the place of her stay is believed to be enough to make a man unclean and unfitted to enter the sanctuary, depriving him of the support and protection of the patron saint of the community and making his every enterprise a failure. Consequently it is decreed by custom that before every undertaking the man has to cease intercourse with the woman whose nearness pollutes him, and he must prepare himself in order to be clean by the special rules of abstention and purification.

The best example of this is found in the customs of the Svans. According to their beliefs, hunting is a sacred affair,[3] and consequently a hunter has to live a clean life. He has no right to have intercourse with any strange woman but only with his legitimate wife. Even with his own wife he is obliged to cease these relations one day before the hunting expedition. He may not start on the hunt when someone of his womenfolk has a monthly issue, nor even if any woman in his neighborhood is in a similar condition at the time. The Svans believed that a hunter could be successful on his expedition only if he abstained from sexual intercourse and also avoided the proximity of a mother with a newborn babe until they were purified.[4]

Although the customs regulating the relations with the female sex were strict for every male member of the community, even more was required of the attendants and servants of the sanctuary. Thus the shepherds of the *sakhato* flocks—the flocks of the famous sanctuary, *Thamar mepe,* in Pshavia—who were chosen from the members of the congregation for a certain period of time for the

[3] This subject is described in detail in the chapter dealing with Contract.
[4] Dmitriev: 167.

[1 [see card 116, pp 91-93 - - Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

service of the communal sanctuary, were obliged to abstain from intercourse with women during the whole time of their occupation, in order to be clean and worthy of their sacred work in the eyes of the patron saint of the sanctuary. And as for the immediate attendants of the *Khati*, such as the *khutsi, dekanozi, khevisberi, dasturi, shulta,* and *mnate,* they are obliged to prepare themselves for every church festival and to lead a pure life of chastity before and during the church holidays. The rigidity of the requirements increases with the rank of the attendants in the service of the *Khati.* Thus, the *shultas* and *mnates* are required to cease relations with their wives for four weeks prior to every church holiday lest they be unclean for their holy service. The requirements for the *dasturi* are more strict than those for the *shultas.* The *dasturi* not only are forbidden to go near their wives for the period of four weeks before the holidays, but they are not even permitted to pass near a *samrevlo,* lest they become unclean. The *khutsis, khevis-beris* and *dekanozis* are obliged to be examples of purity and chastity for the entire congregation. Besides abstaining from intercourse with their wives for four weeks, as the other attendants of the *Khati* are required to do, before every church holiday they have to prepare themselves for the holy office with special fasting and baths. They are not allowed to pass near a *samrevlo*[1] or even look toward one from a distance, and if they accidentally come near a *samrevlo* they must turn their face away from it and pass by, looking in another direction, because even a look would be enough, according to the beliefs of the people, to make them unclean and unfit for the sacred services in the *Khati.*

These regulations are scrupulously followed at the present time. For example, the Russian investigator, V. A. Gurko-Kriajin, who visited the country of the Khevsurs in the summer of 1927, was an eye-witness of the above-mentioned customs. "It is interesting to note," writes Mr. Gurko-Kriajin,[2] that the men not only are forbidden to visit these women's huts (the *samrevlos*), but it is not recommended to them even to pass in their vicinity. When in Shatil,[2] I myself observed a priest, the *khevis-beri* of the local

[2] Gurko-Kriajin: 281.
[2] A village in Khevsuria.

[1] [i.e., menstrual hut—Author]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

sanctuary, making a great turn in his way in order that he might not pass near the *samrevlo* and thus pollute himself."

All objects and vessels used by a woman during the time of her separation in the menstrual hut (*samrevlo*) are regarded as unclean, and before returning home at the end of her abnormal state, she is obliged to scrub and clean them thoroughly. In times past they were thrown away. Besides this, she washes her clothes and takes a special bath, which among the Khevsurs is a very unusual affair.

The customs observed by the woman in time of menstruation are, comparatively, not so rigid as those required of the woman in childbed.

Pregnant women also are regarded as unclean, even in a much greater degree than those in menstruation. They are called *umretskhlo*. The woman with child tries to conceal her condition as long as possible, but when she feels the approach of the critical moment, she is obliged to leave her home and stay apart in a small hut built for the purpose and called *sachekhi* or *kokhi*. However, according to V. Bardavelidze-Lomia,[1] the term *sachekhi* connotes, not the hut itself, but a place outside the village where all the *samrevlos* and *kokhis* are located.

The word *kokhi* means, in Georgian, a hut. Unlike the *samrevlo*, it is built by women only, usually by those who are living in the *samrevlo* at the time. The *kokhi* is much smaller and simpler in structure than the *samrevlo*. Sometimes it is built adjacent to a *samrevlo*, so that one of *samrevlo's* walls is used as a wall of the *kokhi*. It is partially floored with boards and straw; there is no window or place for a fire (hearth) as in the *samrevlo*. The hut is so small that it can accommodate only one woman, allowing a small space for her baby. The whole furniture consists of a jar for water, a wooden plate for bread or other food, and the straw spread on the earthen floor, upon which the woman lies and which is called *salogine*, from the Georgian word *logini*, meaning a bed.

In the cold semi-darkness of the *kokhi* the woman bears her child; only little girls or old women are allowed to bring her food.

[1] Bardavelidze-Lomia: 247.

C. G. 776 thunder), often identified with Christian saints (e.g. the god of thunder with St. Elias or St. George); patrons of agriculture, of cattle breeding, of horsemen, of thieves, etc.; and also a large array of spirits, angels, witches, and wood-giants; and finally a variety of superstitions, of which may be mentioned C. G. [778] the fear of the "evil eye."

The religious worship of the Georgian mountain tribes has reverted to their ancient C. G. [778] tribal religion, veiled by Christian terminology. Their places of worship, called khat'i "icon" or dzhvari "cross," are small huts of rough stones, mostly standing in sacred groves. Their only adornment are pieces of cloth or horns of the Caucasian capricorn as votive offerings. The same words denote also the supernatural power residing in these huts; it is conceived as a sort of mediator between mankind and the supreme god called Morige "he who allots, distributes." Each village and each clan have their khati, and each tribe, too, had a common khat'i; e.g., that of the Pshav is called Lashris dzhvari, that of the Mtiul Lomisas dzhvari. Every member of the clan considers himself a "serf" (q'ma) of the khat'i, which may send him success, or disease and death. Each khat'i possessed pastures, arable land and woods where it was C. G. 793 forbidden to fell a single tree. Attached to it was a body of functionaries who were appointed temporarily or held their office by

C. G. hereditary rights. The priest, called khevis
• 793 beri "elder of the valley," khutsi "priest" or
dek'anozi "dean," pronounced the ceremonial
C. G. prayers and sacrificed the sheep and cows
[782] offered as victims. The kadagi or dzhvaris
C. G. meene "interpreter," "tongue of the dzhvari,"
[791] a kind of shaman, pronounced the will of the
khat'i. The medroshe "standard bearer" or
khat'is pekhi "foot of the khat'i" carried the
sacred banner (drosha) on festive days. A
special functionary attended to the brewing of
the sacred beer, a custom borrowed from the
C. G. Ossetes. The beer was drunk at the annual
[795] festivals which were attended by all the "serfs"
of the khat'i.

In Svanetia the functions of the Khevsur khevis beri were performed by priests not regularly ordained and without any theological training; they were called bap (from Greek
C. G. pappas). The numerous ancient churches
[771] were neglected and were only used for storing the vessels, vestments and books relating to the divine service; these were jealously
C. G. guarded from alienation. Many originally
796 Christian feasts and Saint's days were celebrated with prayers, drinking of home-made brandy and eating of sacrificed animals and
C. G. fancy bread of different traditional shapes.
[769] Similar rites were observed on the commemoration days of the dead which were performed at fixed intervals.